

# The Regional Municipality of York

Regional Council  
Planning and Economic Development  
September 16, 2021

Report of the Commissioner of Corporate Services and Chief Planner

## Alternate 2051 Forecast and Land Needs Assessment Scenarios in Response to Consultation

### 1. Recommendations

1. Council direct staff to proceed with a phased 50-55% intensification scenario in the updated Regional Official Plan, specifically 50% intensification annually to 2041 and 55% intensification annually from 2041 to 2051.
2. The Regional Clerk forward this report to the local municipalities, the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing and to the Region's Members of Provincial Parliament.

### 2. Summary

In [March 2021](#), Regional Council was presented with a preliminary 2051 land needs assessment and a distribution of the 2051 York Region forecast to the nine local municipalities. The forecast was prepared using the Growth Plan minimum 50% intensification target and a designated greenfield area density target of [60 residents and jobs per hectare](#). Since March, consultation has occurred with local municipalities, stakeholders, and the public. A key outcome from the consultation was the need to consider different land need scenarios based on alternative intensification and density target assumptions.

This report is to summarize input received through consultation, present an overview of alternate scenarios, and recommend a growth scenario for inclusion in the draft Regional Official Plan.

Key Points:

- Input received from local municipalities, Planning Advisory Committee (PAC), Building Industry and Land Development (BILD), other stakeholders and the public have prompted consideration of five alternative forecast scenarios:
  1. Modifications to the proposed March 2021 50% intensification target and 60 residents and jobs per hectare designated greenfield area density target scenario
  2. Phased 50-55% intensification target scenario
  3. 55% intensification target scenario

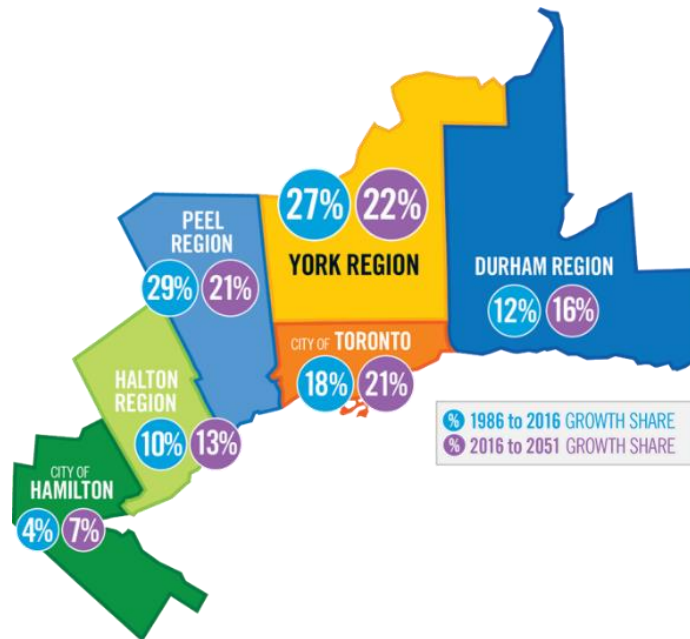
4. 60% intensification target scenario
  5. Designated greenfield area density target of 50 residents and jobs per hectare scenario
- Growth scenarios considered were limited to those that conform with Provincial legislation which constrain where and how the Region can grow, including prohibiting urban expansion within the Protected Countryside of the Greenbelt and Oak Ridges Moraine Plan areas
  - Municipalities across the Greater Golden Horseshoe are considering intensification and designated greenfield area density targets that exceed Growth Plan minimums
  - Striking the right balance to address stakeholder comments, in the context of good planning and market realities is important
  - Scenarios exceeding a 55% intensification target or that assume a designated greenfield area density of 50 residents and jobs per hectare are not recommended as they are not reflective of what the market is likely to deliver
  - A phased 50-55% intensification scenario is recommended as an achievable growth scenario that best addresses stakeholder feedback

### **3. Background**

#### **York Region is required to plan for Provincial Growth Plan forecasts for a population of 2.02 million and 990,000 jobs for York Region by 2051**

The Growth Plan provides long-term direction to municipalities to plan for and manage growth, including where and how to grow as well as population and employment forecasts for upper- and single-tier municipalities. York Region is forecast to grow to a population of 2.02 million and 990,000 jobs by 2051. This represents growth of approximately 800,000 people and 345,000 jobs between 2021 and 2051, the highest of any Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area (GTHA) municipality, as shown in Figure 1.

**Figure 1**  
**Distribution of Historical and Forecast Growth by GTHA Municipality**



Municipalities in the Greater Golden Horseshoe, including York Region, are required to use Provincial forecasts and policies in the Growth Plan predicated on protecting the Greenbelt and the natural environment and building complete communities that are financially sustainable and well integrated with infrastructure investment as the basis for land use planning and managing growth. The Growth Plan sets minimum targets of 50% intensification and 50 residents and jobs per hectare in the designated greenfield area, respectively. As minimums, higher targets are reasonable based on the urbanizing context and market realities in each municipality. The Regional Forecast presented to Council in March 2021 assumed an intensification rate of 50% and a designated greenfield area density of 60 residents and jobs per hectare. This was based on past reporting and direction by Council through commenting on Provincial changes to the Growth Plan and MCR.

Municipalities are required to use the standardized Provincial Land Needs Assessment methodology to determine land needs to 2051. The methodology defines components, such as achieving the Growth Plan minimum intensification target, that must be assessed on a Region wide basis when determining the quantity of land needed to accommodate forecasted growth, including the need for any urban expansion.

**A preliminary 2051 Forecast and Land Needs Assessment was received by Council for the purposes of consultation and engagement in March 2021**

In March 2021, Regional Council was presented with a [Proposed 2051 Forecast and Land Needs Assessment](#) based on the 50% intensification and designated greenfield area density of 60 residents and jobs per hectare targets. The report included proposed population and employment forecasts to 2051 for all nine municipalities as well as proposed mapping of the 3,400 hectares of urban expansion, or 80% of the Region’s remaining Whitebelt lands,

required to accommodate provincially directed growth. Included in this figure was 2,300 hectares of Community Land primarily for residential uses and 1,100 hectares of Employment Land. Through receipt of the report, Regional Council directed staff to consult on the proposed forecasts and land needs assessment results. Part of the consultation process included a request for local municipal Council endorsed comments on the proposed forecasts by July 15, 2021.

## 4. Analysis

### **Eight local municipalities provided Council-endorsed positions on proposed forecasts**

Between April and June 2021, Regional staff attended seven local municipal Council meetings to present the proposed 2051 forecast and land needs assessment. Staff provided an overview of the results of applying the provincially mandated Land Needs Assessment Methodology at a Regional scale as well as a detailed summary of the assumptions informing proposed growth by local municipality. Through these and subsequent Council sessions, eight of nine local municipal Council endorsed comments on the draft forecast. Markham staff comments were presented to Council but were referred back to staff for supplemental analysis. A summary of local municipal Council positions is presented in Table 1 below while Attachment 1 provides more detailed comments.

**Table 1**  
**Summary of local municipal comments on draft forecast**

<b>Local Municipality</b>	<b>General Direction</b>
Aurora, Georgina	Support forecasts as proposed
King, Richmond Hill, Vaughan	Forecasts likely to be met or exceeded
Markham <sup>1</sup> , Newmarket, Whitchurch-Stouffville	Request for higher growth / intensification
East Gwillimbury	Request for entirety of Town's Whitebelt
Markham <sup>1</sup>	Request for less Whitebelt expansion
King	Request for redistribution of Whitebelt growth to Township's villages

<sup>1</sup> Markham comments reflect staff recommendations, referred back to staff for further consideration

In addition to comments on population and employment forecasts, several local municipalities also noted the importance of key transportation and servicing infrastructure projects that would be required to support growth to 2051.

### **Input from local municipal Councils, York Region Planning Advisory Committee, BILD, agriculture community, and the public has prompted staff to consider alternate forecast scenarios**

In addition to comments received from local municipalities, input on the proposed forecasts has also been received from stakeholders. Comments from BILD request that the Region consider alternative growth scenarios in determining 2051 land needs. Specifically, a consultant technical submission proposed a growth scenario that included the entirety of the East Gwillimbury Whitebelt as urban expansion.

Input from the Planning Advisory Committee, and the agricultural community through the York Region Federation of Agriculture expressed concern with the quantum of agricultural land that would be lost because of proposed urban expansion to 2051 under the 50% scenario. The York Region Federation of Agriculture also expressed concern about the impact on local food supply for current and future York Region residents, particularly considering the recent COVID-19 pandemic.

Through the Region's housing and growth management consultation campaign, input was received from the public regarding potential impacts of proposed growth on climate change, housing supply and affordability as well as on the agricultural system. During the campaign that ran between June 28 and July 30, 2021, 186 people participated in an online survey and over 90 people attended a Public Open House on July 27, 2021. More detailed comments are included in Attachment 1.

The breadth of comments received from local municipal Councils and other stakeholders prompted staff to recommend adjustments to the March 2021 50% intensification scenario as well as assess four additional growth scenarios.

### **Municipalities across the Greater Golden Horseshoe are considering intensification and designated greenfield area density targets that exceed Growth Plan minimums**

Municipalities across the Greater Golden Horseshoe (GGH), including York Region, are required to use the standardized Provincial Land Needs Assessment methodology to update their Regional Official Plan forecasts to 2051. As municipalities advance through their Municipal Comprehensive Review processes, many have, or are considering the results of, increased intensification and designated greenfield area density targets. Table 2 summarizes the range of scenarios being considered by municipalities across the GGH, where available.

**Table 2**  
**Summary of intensification and density targets being considered by municipalities in the Greater Golden Horseshoe**

Municipality	Intensification (% annually in built up area)	Density (residents and jobs per hectare)
Peel	55%	65
Halton	50%-54%	65
Durham	Not available	Not available
Hamilton	50%-no urban expansion	65-77
Waterloo	55%-60%	60-65
York	50%-60%	50-60

Source: Regional Planning Commissioners of Ontario

As shown in Table 2, several municipalities are considering intensification targets higher than the minimum 50% target in the Growth Plan. All municipalities are applying density targets at or above 60 residents and jobs per hectare, exceeding the Growth Plan minimum of 50. This is consistent with the assumption used in the Region’s March 2021 proposed forecast following a report to Regional Council in [June 2020](#) indicating that recently built or under construction communities in York Region were achieving an average 62 residents and jobs per hectare. Table 2 confirms that in a number of communities across the GTHA and beyond, communities are being planned at greater than 60 people and jobs per hectare.

Intensification and density targets in other municipalities are informative when recommending a forecast to 2051 for York Region. Apart from the City of Toronto, York Region is the only municipality in the GGH with access to an existing and additional future subway. As evidenced by the recent opening of the Spadina Subway Extension in Vaughan, subway stations are catalysts for intensification and major office development. When planning for growth to 2051, consideration should be given to the risk of the Province prioritizing transit in municipalities who may be planning for higher rates of intensification and/or designated greenfield area densities.

**Five alternate growth scenarios, including a modified March 2021 50% intensification scenario, were assessed at a Regional scale in response to consultation**

In response to input from stakeholders and the interjurisdictional scan in Table 2, five alternate growth scenarios were prepared and assessed. For the purposes of this report, Scenarios 1 and 2, being the modified 50% scenario and the recommended phased 50-55% scenario, were broken down to the local municipal level while scenarios 3-5 were assessed

from a Regional planning perspective and were prepared by adjusting either the Region-wide intensification rate or the designated greenfield area density assumption in response to comments received.

1. **A modified March 2021 50% intensification and 60 residents and jobs per hectare designated greenfield area density scenario** – this scenario was prepared in response to comments received from local municipalities on the proposed March 2021 scenario. Proposed changes continue to support Regional objectives of supporting and encouraging investment in rapid transit infrastructure and growth management principles of aligning growth and infrastructure. The following highlights the most significant changes in this scenario with further details by local municipality provided in Attachment 2:
  - Additional growth allocated to Newmarket and Whitchurch-Stouffville
  - Revisions to urban expansion mapping to shift approximately 100 Ha (and an estimated 8,000 people) of urban expansion growth from Markham to East Gwillimbury to increase the intensification rate in Markham and provide some additional growth in East Gwillimbury in a manner that would not require the second expansion of the Upper York Water Reclamation Centre
  - Minor revisions to population growth in all other municipalities
2. **Phased 50-55% intensification scenario** – a scenario that considers 50% intensification to 2041 and 55% between 2041 and 2051. Developed in response to requests from the Planning Advisory Committee and a number of local municipal Councils requesting higher growth through intensification, observed increases in secondary plan targets and planning applications in intensification areas as noted in the 2021 Capacity Assignment Update report, as well as comments from the York Region Federation of Agriculture and the public expressing concerns over the loss of Prime Agricultural lands. This scenario represents the most modest shift towards higher density structure types of the three higher intensification scenarios considered. Relative to the March 2021 scenario, this scenario results in a reduction in urban expansion in Markham (and increase in Markham's intensification rate) and a net urban expansion reduction overall while also accommodating a slight increase in urban expansion lands within the Town of East Gwillimbury in response to their request for additional urban expansion lands.
3. **55% intensification scenario** – a more significant intensification scenario developed in response to the requests noted above.
4. **60% intensification** – Compared to the phased 50-55% and 55% scenarios above, it represents the most significant shift of the three higher intensification scenarios which contemplate requests from a number of local municipal Councils requesting higher growth through intensification.
5. **Designated greenfield area density of 50 residents and jobs per hectare in urban expansion areas combined with 50% intensification** - developed in

response to a submission from East Gwillimbury landowners recommending this lower designated greenfield area density rate and to support the Town's request to incorporate the entirety of the Whitebelt lands by 2051.

### **Alternate intensification and density target scenarios determine the amount of new community land needed, number of intensification units, and the forecast housing mix**

Table 3 summarizes key outcomes of each alternative growth scenario with respect to community urban expansion land needs, structure type mix, and assumed apartment units per year, providing context to assess the feasibility of each growth scenario.

**Table 3**  
**Results of alternate growth scenarios**

Scenario	Community Land Needs	Structure Type Mix (ground-related/apartments)	Apartments per year (units/buildings)
1. 50% intensification (March 2021 and as modified)	2,300 Ha	58% / 42%	4,000 / 20
2. Phased 50-55% intensification	2,050 Ha	56% / 44%	4,100 / 21
3. 55% intensification	1,500 Ha	54% / 46%	4,300 / 22
4. 60% intensification	700 Ha	51% / 49%	4,700 / 24
5. 50 residents and jobs per hectare and 50% intensification	2,700 Ha	59% / 41%	3,800 / 19

Note – Scenarios 1-4 prepared using a designated greenfield area density of 60 residents and jobs per hectare.  
Source: York Region Planning and Economic Development Branch

While the Region will re-evaluate the distribution of employment land requirements in conjunction with Council's direction on a growth scenario, there is not expected to be significant differences in the amount of employment lands needed between the different scenarios. Under any intensification scenario, the demand for employment area employment is anticipated to remain similar and it will be important for the Region to provide a broad range of choice for existing and long-term future employment land use needs.

### **The recommended growth scenario achieves the right balance to address stakeholder comments and Growth Plan objectives**

The results in Table 3 have been considered in the context of comments received from local municipalities, the public, and other stakeholders as well as the principles for growth management in the Growth Plan, the Regional Official Plan and objectives introduced in the



[March 2021](#) report. Striking the appropriate balance between stakeholder input and broader growth management objectives summarized below is fundamental to staff's recommendation of a preferred growth scenario:

- The market feasibility of each growth scenario in the context of recently built communities, units under application in the development pipeline, the overall shift required in the Region's housing mix, and considerations relating to housing affordability
- Alignment with the provision of infrastructure within the 2051 planning horizon and the ability to pay for infrastructure required to support growth in a financially sustainable manner (including transit infrastructure that will require support from other levels of government)
- Ability for each growth scenario to address local municipal Council requests for higher intensification and balance requests from some local municipalities for more and less Whitebelt growth
- Requests from the agricultural community and the public to consider impacts of growth on Prime Agricultural lands, climate change, etc.

### **Scenarios address local municipal Council positions to varying degrees**

Table 4 compares the five new alternate scenarios with comments received through the consultation process. The table considers how each scenario addresses feedback received from local municipal Councils as well as other stakeholders on the preliminary March 2021 50% intensification and 60 residents and jobs per hectare density scenario.

**Table 4**  
**Addressing stakeholder consultations under alternate scenarios**

Comment on March 2021 scenario	Scenario 1: Modified 50%	Scenario 2: Phased 50- 55%	Scenario 3: 55% Intensification	Scenario 4: 60% Intensification	Scenario 5: 50 res&jobs/ha Density
More Whitebelt expansion in East Gwillimbury	✓	✓	X	X	✓✓✓✓
Less Whitebelt expansion in Markham	✓	✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓✓	X
Shift Whitebelt Growth to Villages in King	X	X	X	X	X
Higher growth in Newmarket	✓	✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓✓	✓
More intensification in King, Markham, Richmond Hill, Vaughan and Whitchurch Stouffville	X	✓	✓✓	✓✓✓	X
Strive toward minimum of 60% intensification in Markham	X	✓	✓✓	✓✓✓✓	X
Less impact on Prime Agricultural lands	X	✓	✓✓	✓✓✓✓	X

Source: York Region Planning and Economic Development Branch

Note: Scenarios 3, 4 and 5 not forecasted to Local Municipal level to quantify outcome

Rating scale: X = Not Addressed, Slightly Addressed = ✓, Slightly-Moderately Addressed = ✓✓, Moderately Addressed = ✓✓✓, Fully Addressed = ✓✓✓✓

As illustrated in Table 4, each growth scenario addresses stakeholder comments to varying degrees, as indicated by the number of check marks. A higher number of check marks does not mean a more preferable scenario, but rather the degree to which the comment has been addressed. While a modified 50% intensification growth scenario allows for several

comments from local Councils to be addressed, it does not provide as much flexibility as higher intensification scenarios to address comments from municipalities desiring higher intensification and less urban expansion. Scenarios including and exceeding 55% intensification would not provide capacity for additional Whitebelt growth in East Gwillimbury. While higher intensification scenarios may not provide municipalities with their desired intensification rates, it is important to note that the Region's assigned intensification targets can be treated as minimums and local municipalities can plan for higher targets through local Official Plans.

### **Provincial policy prohibits Urban Expansion into the Protected Countryside of the Greenbelt and Oak Ridges Moraine Plan Areas**

Several submissions have been received requesting urban designation and/or urban expansion on lands within the Protected Countryside of the Greenbelt and Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan Areas. This includes previous requests from the Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville and the City of Richmond Hill. As shown in Attachment 1, the Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville has reiterated this request through their Council endorsed comments on the proposed forecast. As outlined in a report regarding potential employment lands along 400 series highways within Greenbelt Plan Area, received by Council [October 2020](#), Provincial Plan policies prohibit the approval of urban designations within the Protected Countryside. As a result, allocation of population or employment growth to these areas has not been considered in any of the scenarios assessed in support of this report.

### **A scenario at or above 55% intensification is not recommended as it is likely to require too significant a shift toward higher density structure types**

Scenarios at or above 55% intensification require less community land urban expansion compared to the proposed March 2021 50% scenario. The 55% intensification scenario results in a need for 1,500 hectares of additional community land, while the 60% intensification scenario requires 700 hectares of urban expansion land for community land purposes. While a higher intensification scenario is desirable to support transit investment and would address desires for higher intensification targets from a number of municipalities, a forecast scenario at or above 55% intensification would require a significant, and potentially unachievable shift toward high density structure types. Specifically, the number of larger sized families forecasted to occupy higher density structure types rather than traditional ground-related product is likely to exceed what the market can currently support. This results in a potentially unrealistic forecasted mix and distribution of growth over the 30-year horizon – particularly in the short term – which presents more risk to the Region from an infrastructure alignment and financial sustainability perspective. Investment in infrastructure is dependent on the forecast assumptions.

### **A growth scenario premised on a designated greenfield area density target of 50 residents and jobs per hectare does not reflect what the York Region market is delivering**

A growth scenario that is predicated on a designated greenfield area density of 50 residents and jobs per hectare is not appropriate for York Region. Forecasted designated greenfield

area density must reflect what the market is likely to deliver as it has implications on infrastructure timing and delivery, determining pipe size, planning for new roads and road improvements, and estimating future transit ridership. It also has impacts on how the Region calculates development charge rates and estimating development charge revenue. As illustrated in the June 2020 [Planning for Density in New Communities](#) report, recently built or under construction communities across York Region are delivering an average density of 62 residents and jobs per hectare. Since the York Region market is delivering over 60 residents and jobs per hectare in existing greenfield areas, planning for the minimum 50 density in the Growth Plan would leave the Region exposed to risk as it does not support infrastructure or financial planning in line with market reality. If planned growth and densities do not match market realities, development charge rates may not achieve effective cost recovery.

As noted in Table 2 above, 50 residents and jobs per hectare would also be lower than what is generally being realized and contemplated in other GGH municipalities. Not only does this suggest that the market is capable of delivering far greater than a 50 people/jobs per hectare density in new community areas but planning to a density target lower than other GTHA municipalities could impact funding decisions by the Province for future transit projects.

A key consideration throughout the Municipal Comprehensive Review has been to ensure that growth proceeds in a manner that is aligned with infrastructure and is financially sustainable. A growth scenario that assumes 50 residents and jobs per hectare in urban expansion areas would require the entire Whitebelt in the Town of East Gwillimbury and would challenge the Region's ability to achieve this principle and therefore carries significant risk. As noted above, given that the market is currently delivering over 60 residents and jobs per hectare in greenfield communities throughout the Region, assuming growth across the entirety of East Gwillimbury's Whitebelt lands would require the second of two expansions beyond the initial construction of the Upper York Water Reclamation Centre plant facility. A second expansion project with its own Environmental Assessment approval cannot be anticipated within the 2051 planning horizon. Uncertainty surrounding the timing of the initial construction of the Water Reclamation Centre is a risk given the announcement by the Province to develop a Task Force to determine an appropriate recommendation for the project under Bill 306. Based on current information available, initial construction of the Water Reclamation Centre is not expected until 2029 at the earliest, with the first expansion anticipated for 2041 or beyond. A second expansion, required to support full build out of the East Gwillimbury Whitebelt, is not anticipated to occur before 2051.

### **The modified 50% scenario includes shifting some urban expansion from Markham to East Gwillimbury, while maintaining March intensification and density target assumptions**

The modified 50% scenario provides additional growth to Newmarket and Whitchurch-Stouffville and shifts approximately 100 Ha (and an estimated 8,000 people) relative to the March 2021 scenario of urban expansion growth from Markham to East Gwillimbury in order to increase the intensification rate in Markham and provide some additional growth in East Gwillimbury in a manner that would not require the second expansion of the Upper York Water Reclamation Centre. This scenario also includes minor revisions to population growth in the remaining municipalities.

Regional staff have been engaged in discussions with Town of East Gwillimbury staff to explore alternative financing options for the Upper York Water Reclamation Centre. While staff support opportunities to advance development opportunities in the Town's Whitebelt lands, there is continued concern that infrastructure required to address the entire Whitebelt in the Town will not be delivered in time to support full buildout of these lands within the 2051 planning horizon. A fundamental consideration of a preferred growth scenario is that the second expansion of the Upper York Water Reclamation Centre, currently planned beyond 2051, is not required for designating land within the planning horizon.

Furthermore, this scenario would result in there being a fragmented piece of Whitebelt land east of the Little Rouge corridor in Markham.

### **A phased 50-55% intensification scenario is recommended as it best supports stakeholder feedback and continues to provide balanced growth**

Following an assessment of the alternative scenarios, as summarized in Table 4, the phased 50-55% intensification scenario provides for an appropriate balance between addressing stakeholder comments, market realities and conforming to the Growth Plan. A phased 50-55% growth scenario provides additional flexibility with respect to intensification and reduces the overall quantum of prime agriculture lands proposed for urban expansion. It also strikes a balance between reducing urban expansion in Markham and some additional urban expansion in East Gwillimbury relative to the March 2021 50% intensification and 60 residents and per hectare jobs scenario. This scenario balances a number of Regional objectives:

- Provides increased flexibility to address comments from local municipal and other stakeholders requesting higher growth and/or intensification targets
- Maximizes the growth potential associated with the initial construction and first expansion of the Upper York Water Reclamation Centre under current Environmental Assessment assumptions and proposes 275 hectares of East Gwillimbury Whitebelt expansion, an addition of approximately 100 hectares when compared with the preliminary March 2021 scenario
- Reduces the overall quantum of Whitebelt land required and therefore preservation of more agricultural lands
- Demonstrates to the Province that the Region is committed to supporting intensification and is a key location in the GTHA for additional transit investment
- Reflects what the market is currently delivering and what is proposed in the development pipeline and secondary plans with respect to both designated greenfield area density as well as high density development in the built-up area
- Provides more opportunity for a gradual and reasonable shift toward families locating in townhomes and apartments that are more affordable

- Considers changing demographics and an aging population which is likely to increase demand for higher density structure types as well as result in a number of low-density units “turning over” to younger, larger families
- Aligns with infrastructure planning and Development Charges By-law work undertaken to date
- Aligns with higher rates of intensification and designated greenfield area density target assumptions in other GGH municipalities
- A summary of impacts at the local municipal scale is further shown in Attachment 2

A phased in 55% intensification scenario would continue to be achievable from an intensification perspective and may be more likely to provide additional opportunities for affordable housing types through increased demand for medium and high-density structures that are traditionally more affordable. That said, more detailed Regional plans and programs are required to help address affordability challenges.

### **Allocation of growth based on recommended phased 50-55% scenario can be accommodated without major shifts in infrastructure and financial planning undertaken to date**

The Municipal Comprehensive Review is being undertaken in a comprehensive and collaborative way to ensure alignment of land use, infrastructure, and financial planning. In this regard the ROP update is being coordinated with Infrastructure Master Plan updates and the Development Charges bylaw update, with considerable work having been undertaken to date. The preliminary forecast presented in March 2021 included assessment of infrastructure required to service growth, and how it could be phased to maintain financial sustainability.

Based on preliminary analysis, the recommended phased 50-55% intensification scenario can be accommodated within the infrastructure program being proposed in updated master plans. Given that several MCRs, Master Plan, and DC Bylaw updates will be undertaken between now and 2051, there will be opportunities to monitor and adjust growth projections as necessary at multiple stages in the planning horizon. Identifying the remaining Whitebelt lands as “Future Urban” beyond 2051 in either scenario also acknowledges the reality of the future long-term function of these lands and allows for comprehensive planning in advance of subsequent municipal comprehensive reviews.

As a result of no major shifts in infrastructure being required, Regional Council direction to proceed with the recommended phased 50-55% growth scenario means that local municipal forecasts, presented in Attachment 2, can be included in the draft Regional Official Plan anticipated for Council consideration this year. The 55% and 60% intensification growth scenarios and the full build out of East Gwillimbury lands available for urban expansion under a 50 residents and jobs per hectare scenario would necessitate a significant redistribution of population growth across the Region which would require further analysis and consultation with local municipalities. This and further evaluation of infrastructure needed to support

growth and financial implications would be required, requiring modifications to the current MCR, Master Plan, and DC Bylaw update work plans.

### **Population and employment growth beyond the existing and planned infrastructure capacity in Nobleton is not proposed**

The scenarios considered, including the recommended phased 50-55% intensification scenario, do not address comments from both King staff and a technical consultant submission on behalf of Nobleton landowners to consider additional growth in Nobleton instead of growth in the King Whitebelt lands. As indicated by the Region in March, preliminary estimates indicate that expanding the water and wastewater capacity in Nobleton beyond the 10,800 people currently contemplated in an ongoing Environmental Assessment range from \$100 to \$200 million and therefore would not be financially sustainable given the amount of additional growth that could be realized. While discussions between York Region and Township staff, as well as landowners are ongoing, the current MCR has assumed a maximum population of 10,800 people in Nobleton.

### **Final mapping of urban expansion lands to be determined through further consultation with local municipal staff**

Both the modified 50% and recommended phased 50-55% intensification scenarios propose adjustments to the geography of urban expansion lands as presented in [Attachment 4 of the March 2021 scenario](#). The modified 50% scenario proposes to remove approximately 100 hectares of urban expansion land in east Markham, as shown in Attachment 3, and add it to the 180 hectares of urban expansion initially proposed in East Gwillimbury for a total of 275 hectares of Community Land expansion.

Similarly, the phased 50-55% scenario proposes to remove all of the Whitebelt lands east of the Little Rouge corridor from Markham and include a total of 275 hectares of urban expansion in East Gwillimbury under the phased 50-55% scenario (as shown in Attachment 3). If this scenario is endorsed by Regional Council, the geographic distribution of these lands would be determined in consultation with the Town.

Direction from Council to proceed with the recommended phased 50-55% scenario will require further discussions with Town of East Gwillimbury staff to determine the most appropriate urban expansion lands.

### **Comments on employment and community land designation boundaries were also received through the consultation**

Input from stakeholders on the preliminary March 2021 growth scenario was also received on proposed employment designations in the Region's available Whitebelt lands. Through a local municipally led consultation process, concern was expressed in Markham with the proposed employment mapping adjacent to the existing hamlet of Almira. To address these concerns, Regional staff are proposing to revise the boundary of urban expansion employment land mapping in Markham as shown in Attachment 3 to provide more community lands around the Almira hamlet.

Through Markham's consultation process, concern was also raised about proposed residential uses east of the Little Rouge corridor. It was suggested that noise from the potential future Pickering Airport may prevent residential development on these lands. The Whitebelt lands proposed to be excluded from the urban boundary expansion east of the Little Rouge corridor, in the modified 50% and recommended phased 50-55% intensification scenarios will be identified as Future Urban Area. Decisions surrounding the most appropriate use of these lands can occur through subsequent municipal comprehensive reviews once a firm decision on the airport has been made, and regulations updated.

Concerns were also identified by Vaughan Council about the delineation of employment lands adjacent to the potential GTA-West Highway, given that a decision on the proposed highway is not expected by the Province until after the completion of the Municipal Comprehensive Review. Regional staff will continue to work with Vaughan staff on the appropriate use of these lands through the next Municipal Comprehensive Review.

## **5. Financial**

While no major shifts in financial planning work is anticipated with the recommended phased 50-55% scenario, the March 2021 proposed forecast has been used to inform the update of the Regional development charges bylaw. The current bylaw is set to expire June 16, 2022 and a new development charges bylaw must come into effect on, or before, June 17, 2022 for the Region to continue collecting development charges. Council's direction to proceed with a growth scenario other than the modified 50% scenario or the recommended phased 50-55% scenario would have implications on key inputs to the Development Charges Background Study including the development forecast and infrastructure capital costs that will be reflected in the proposed DC rates.

Although it is difficult to assume the actual rate of growth over time with certainty, the recommended phased 50-55% forecast scenario is most achievable without compromising financial sustainability. It supports alignment of the growth forecast with infrastructure delivery to best match the actual rate and type of built form with the forecast, and more likely alignment between anticipated and actual development charges revenues.

Work associated with updated population and employment forecasts is included within the approved Planning and Economic Development budget.

## **6. Local Impact**

The Region's forecast and land needs assessment to 2051 have direct implications on local municipalities. A key component of the MCR involves distributing updated population and employment forecasts to local municipalities considering assumptions for the level of intensification and amount of urban expansion needed in the Region to plan for provincially assigned population and employment growth. Local municipalities are key stakeholders in their forecast assignments and planning for future communities in growth areas.



Local municipal staff are working alongside the Region to update local official plans to reflect the policies in the Regional Official Plan generated through the Regional MCR once approved. Under the Planning Act, local municipal official plans are required to be updated to conform to the Regional Official Plan within one year of it coming into effect.

## 7. Conclusion

Consultation on the proposed 50% intensification scenario received by Regional Council in March 2021 resulted in Council positions and comments from local municipalities, as well as comments from the public, Planning Advisory Committee, BILD, York Region Federation of Agriculture, and other stakeholders. Comments ranged significantly from requests for higher growth and intensification to desires to include additional Whitebelt lands in the Town of East Gwillimbury. In response to these comments, the Region considered the results of five additional growth scenarios at a Regional scale through varying the key intensification and designated greenfield area density inputs. Through an assessment of alternate growth scenarios, a growth scenario exceeding 55% intensification or one which considered a lower designated greenfield area density are not likely to be realistic outlooks for York Region to 2051. In addition to not being aligned with what the market is currently delivering, or expected to deliver, these scenarios are likely to carry more financial risk.

A phased 50-55% intensification growth scenario is recommended as the most appropriate outlook for York Region to 2051. The phased 50-55% scenario strikes an appropriate balance, responds to feedback from all stakeholders to varying degrees, conforms to applicable Provincial plans, and is expected to be achievable. It also maximizes the capacity of the initial construction and first expansion of the Upper York Water Reclamation Centre under current Environmental Assessment assumptions. Allocation of growth for the recommended phased 50-55% intensification growth scenario can be accommodated without major shifts in infrastructure and financial planning undertaken to date.

Regional Council direction to proceed with the recommended phased 50-55% intensification scenario can be included in the draft Regional Official Plan currently targeted for November 2021.

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For more information on this report, please contact Paul Bottomley, Manager of Policy, Research, and Forecasting at 1-877-464-9675 ext. 71530. Accessible formats or communication supports are available upon request.



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Attachments (3)  
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